

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes _____
no _____

Property Name: Steele's Motel Inventory Number: CE-1549

Address: 421 W. Pulaski Highway (US 40) Intersection of Nottingham Road Historic district: yes ☒ no

City: Elkton Zip Code: 21921 County: Cecil

USGS Quadrangle(s): Elkton

Property Owner: Eastern Motels Inc. Tax Account ID Number: 029042

Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 87 Tax Map Number: 309

Project: US 40 at Thiokol Road Agency: SHA

Agency Prepared By: SHA

Preparer's Name: Patti Kuhn Date Prepared: 02/13/2007

Documentation is presented in: Project Review and Compliance Files

Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: X Eligibility recommended _____ Eligibility not recommended

Criteria: X A B X C D Considerations: A B C D E F G

Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:

Name of the District/Property: _____

Inventory Number: _____ Eligible: yes Listed: yes

Site visit by MHT Staff yes X no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

Steele's Motel at 421 West Pulaski Highway consists of four dwellings and eleven small cabins located on the north side of US 40 at its intersection with Nottingham Road. The buildings are nestled among large desiduous trees. Three of the houses face south on Nottingham Road. The fourth dwelling is located directly behind (north) of the easternmost house. The cabins are located east of the dwellings and are arranged around two parallel gravel drives. The cabins face south towards US 40.

The two westernmost dwellings (dwellings 3 and 4) are identical. Set on a concrete foundation, these dwellings are one-story high and three bays wide. They are clad in stucco and have side-gabled roofs with raking cornices and are covered in asphalt shingles. Fenestration consists of one-over-one metal-sash windows and one-light picture windows with brick rowlock sills. The off-center entrances have single-leaf doors.

The motel office is one-story high, three bays wide, is constructed of stretcher-bond brick, and has a bungalow form. The features of the house elude to the Arts-and-Crafts-style with its front-gabled roof covered in asphalt shingles with wide overhanging eaves and decorative exposed roof beams. A prominent front-gabled porch that lines the main elevation and features large stucco piers

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Eligibility recommended X Eligibility not recommended _____

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MHT Comments: *Example of an increasingly rare property type*

Jim Tanburn
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

4/12/07

Date

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Reviewer, National Register Program

4/12/07

Date

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topped with a cluster of four wood posts. A stuccoed wall capped with brick headers encloses the front of the porch. A large stair on the east side of the porch is flanked by two stuccoed walls topped with bricks. The house is fenestrated by eighteen-over-one double-hung wood windows. A front-gabled bay extends from the east elevation of the house and contains an enclosed porch. The porch features two piers clad in stucco with four square posts, a stuccoed parapet capped with header bricks. Two flared walls, covered in stucco and capped with bricks, line the brick stair leading to the porch entrance. A rear wood-frame addition, covered in vinyl siding, contains the entrance to the motel office.

The dwelling located to the rear of the motel office (dwelling 5) is one-and-a-half stories high and sits on a concrete-block foundation. It is clad in stucco and has a side-gabled roof covered in asphalt shingles. The roof has overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. A one-story, three-bay porch with a shed roof lines the main elevation. Stuccoed piers and squared Tuscan posts support the porch, which is partially enclosed by a stuccoed wall capped with header bricks. Fenestration consists of one-over-one double-hung wood-sash windows. A one-story rear wood-frame addition covered in vinyl siding is located on the rear elevation. A small one-story porch is located on the east elevation of the house.

A group of eight cabins lines the southernmost drive and range in size from two to three bays wide. The wood-frame cabins have a stretcher-bond brick veneer on their main elevations and are clad in vinyl siding on the remaining elevations. Their side-gabled roofs are clad in asphalt shingles and shed-roofed porches with wood posts line the main elevations. Fenestration consists of six-over-six double-hung wood windows.

The northernmost drive has three wood-frame cabins that are one story high and two bays wide. They are clad in vinyl siding and have side-gabled roofs with overhanging eaves and asphalt shingles. Fenestration consists of one-over-one double-hung windows and single-leaf metal replacement doors. Gabled door hoods with brackets shelter two of the cabins' entrances. The two westernmost cabins are connected by a one-story breezeway with a centered single-leaf door. The original doors on these two cabins have been enclosed.

The historic boundaries for the property include Parcel 87 of Tax Map 309 of Cecil County.

Historic Background

Transportation in Cecil County changed dramatically at the turn of the twentieth century and after the establishment of Maryland's State Roads Commission in 1908. By the start of World War I (1914-1918), the state had constructed over fifty miles of new state roads. The new system connected the twenty-three county seats with Baltimore and secondarily interconnected these towns. The highway system not only had a profound effect on the town growth and the agricultural industry, but also on the property values of land that fronted the new highways.¹ The current US 40 was completed in Cecil County by 1939 as the first dual highway built by the Maryland State Roads Commission. US 40, originally called Philadelphia Road (relocated), replaced the earlier two-lane road now known as Old Philadelphia Road (MD 7). US 40 provided convenient access from Baltimore to the Delaware line and created a transportation corridor outside of Elkton.

During the early twentieth century, the introduction of the automobile, its increasing popularity, and improved and new highways created the need for convenient and affordable overnight accommodations for automobile travelers. In addition, the rejection of the traditional hotel, due to its location in congested cities and inconvenient parking, increased the need for suitable lodging. Initially, these accommodations started as cabin camps or tourist camps, and eventually evolved into auto courts, tourist courts, motor hotels, motor lodges, and most commonly into motels. Motels, like hotels, provided lodging for travelers; however, the motel was typically located along a highway and provided the motorist with direct access to individual parking spaces. The number of roadside motels along America's highways increased from six hundred to more than forty thousand between the late

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Eligibility recommended _____

Eligibility not recommended _____

Criteria: _____ A _____ B _____ C _____ D Considerations: _____ A _____ B _____ C _____ D _____ E _____ F _____ G

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Steele's Motel

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1920s and the 1950s.²

Predating the motel were other forms of roadside accommodations that were a result of automobile tourists. They often consisted of free campgrounds with parking and community restrooms. Hoping to encourage a higher class of clientele, the owners of the campgrounds began to erect low-cost cabins. These cabins, the precursor of the modern motel, provided the tourist with comfort, convenience, and privacy. The cabins were often arranged in a row, double row (or row-on-row), L, crescent, or clustered patterns. Early cabins offered few amenities, often only a place to sleep with communal bathrooms located in a separate building. They were commonly not well built and not winterized. As the cabins became more substantial, the term cottage was commonly incorporated into the name of the business. In comparison, cottages were larger and offered in addition to a sleeping area, a bathroom, and a closet. Cabin or cottage camps were also privately owned "mom and pop" businesses, unlike many of the franchise motels that came to dominate the lodging industry during the late 1940s and 1950s.³

According to historic deed records, J. Herman Steele, and his wife, Helen J. Steele, purchased the first of three parcels along US 40 and Nottingham Road in October 1940.⁴ The first parcel contained six and one-eighth acres of land. On August 8, 1952, the Steele's acquired two additional parcels: .09 acres and .178 acres.⁵ Steele's Motel does not appear on the 1942 USGS Map, signifying that it was constructed shortly thereafter. The 1953 USGS Map shows the motel office building, the dwelling directly north of the office, and six cabins. The two westernmost dwellings and the additional cabins were most likely constructed after 1953 and when the Steeles expanded their land holdings.

A circa 1950 postcard illustrates Steele's Motel and states, "One of the nicest courts on the highway." It also described the cottages as being able to accommodate up to six people with tile baths, steam heat, carpeted floors, and close to restaurants and churches. The postcard indicates that the motel was owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Herman Steele. In 1961, the Steele's sold the parcels including the motel to John and Matilda Seaman.⁶

Significance/Evaluation

Steele's motel retains its historic location at the intersection of US 40 (West Pulaski Highway) and Nottingham Road and its original setting of tree-lined drives, rows of cottages, and dwellings is intact. Despite the replacement of the original cladding and windows/doors, the buildings have undergone minimal changes and the replacement materials do not detract from the form and design of the buildings. The design and layout of the buildings are typical of cottage-type motels built during the 1940s and 1950s along heavily-traveled roadways. The small one-story cottages have not been enlarged and new construction has not taken place. Consequently, the design and materials of the buildings maintain sufficient integrity. Due to the lack of major alterations, the original style of the buildings has been maintained and therefore the workmanship is intact. The motel's integrity of feeling and association are apparent as it continues to operate as a motel along the transportation corridor of US 40.

Steele's Motel is associated with the automobile-related travel that defines US 40 after its completion in 1939 and is illustrative of travel and lodging trends that dominated the newly-built and improved highways across the state of Maryland and the United States during the 1940s and 1950s. Therefore it is eligible under Criterion A. It is not associated with any person or group of persons of outstanding importance to the community, state, or nation and is not eligible under Criterion B. The Steele's Motel, with its cluster of motel-related buildings, is exemplary of cottage-type motels and represents the evolution of the American motel as roadside architecture from the post World War II period. It is not a common building type found throughout the state of Maryland, as new lodging trends facilitate the need for larger and more modern accommodations. Therefore, the motel is eligible under Criterion C. The property was not evaluated under Criterion D. SHA has determined that the Steele's Motel is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

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Eligibility recommended _____

Eligibility not recommended _____

Criteria: A B C D Considerations: A B C D E F G

MHT Comments:

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services_____
Date_____
Reviewer, National Register Program_____
Date

Works Cited

1. At the Head of the Bay: A Cultural and Architectural History of Cecil County, Maryland (Crownsville, Maryland: The Cecil Historical Trust Press, 1996), 131.
2. Mary Ann Beecher, "The Motel in Builder's Literature and Architectural Publications," Roadside America: The Automobile in Design and Culture, edited by Jan Jennings (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press for the Society for Commercial Archeology, 1990), p. 115.
3. John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, The Motel in America (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 40-41.
4. Cecil County Deed Records, WEB Liber 18 Folio 179.
5. Cecil County Deed Records, RRC Liber 52 Folios 19-20.
6. Cecil County Deed Records, WAS Liber 20 Folio 224.

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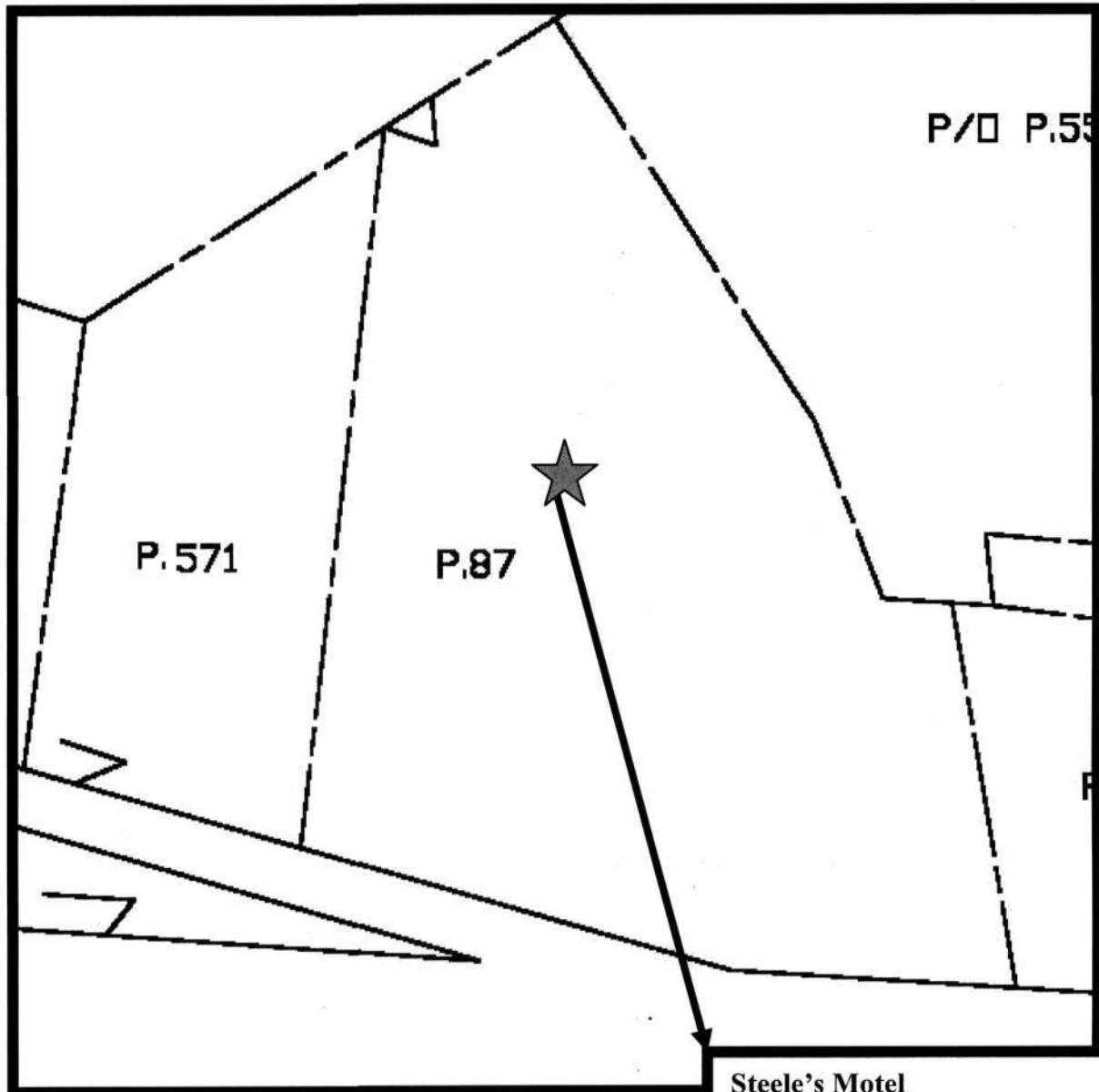
Eligibility not recommended _____

Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D Considerations: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G

MHT Comments:

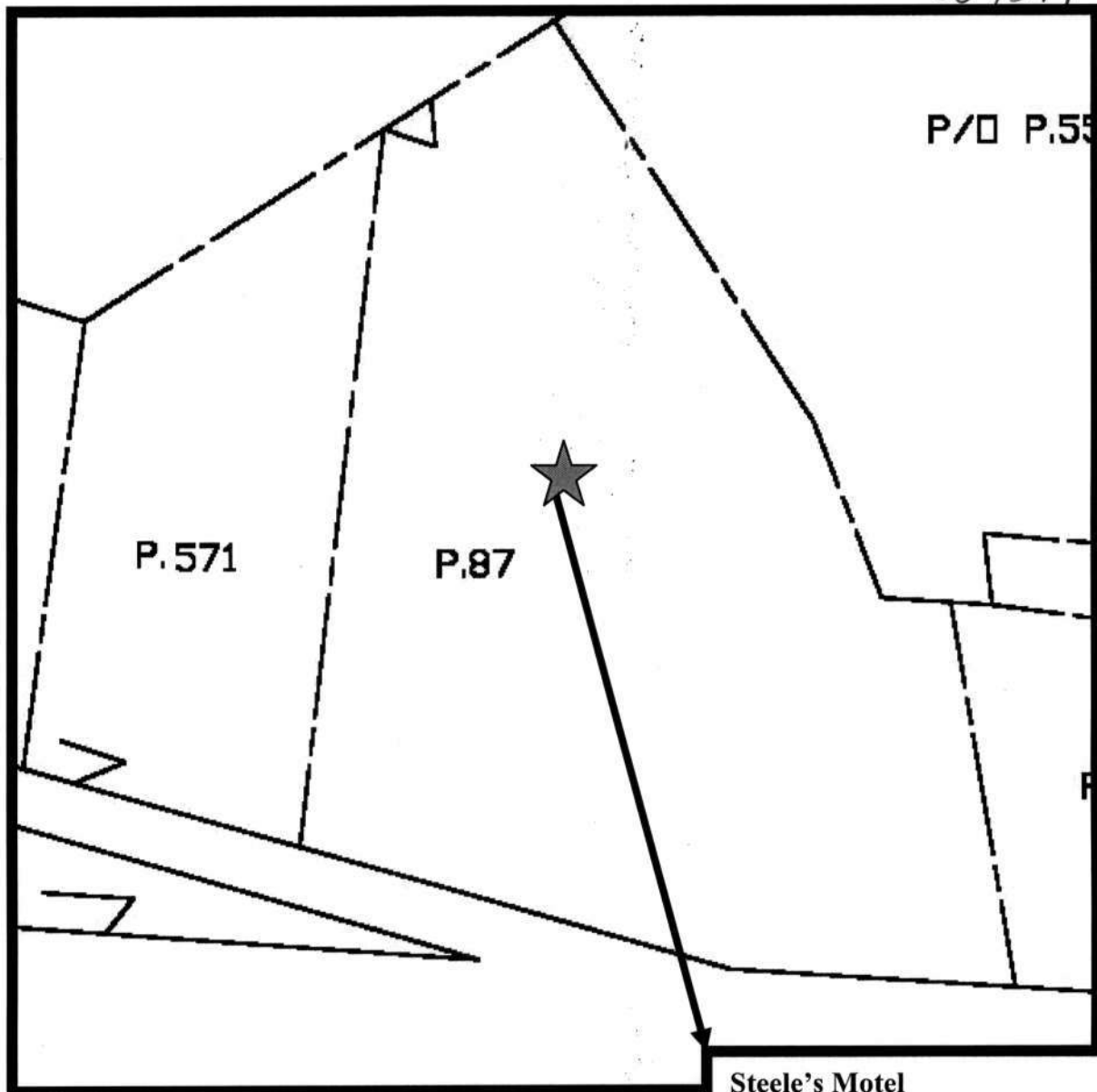
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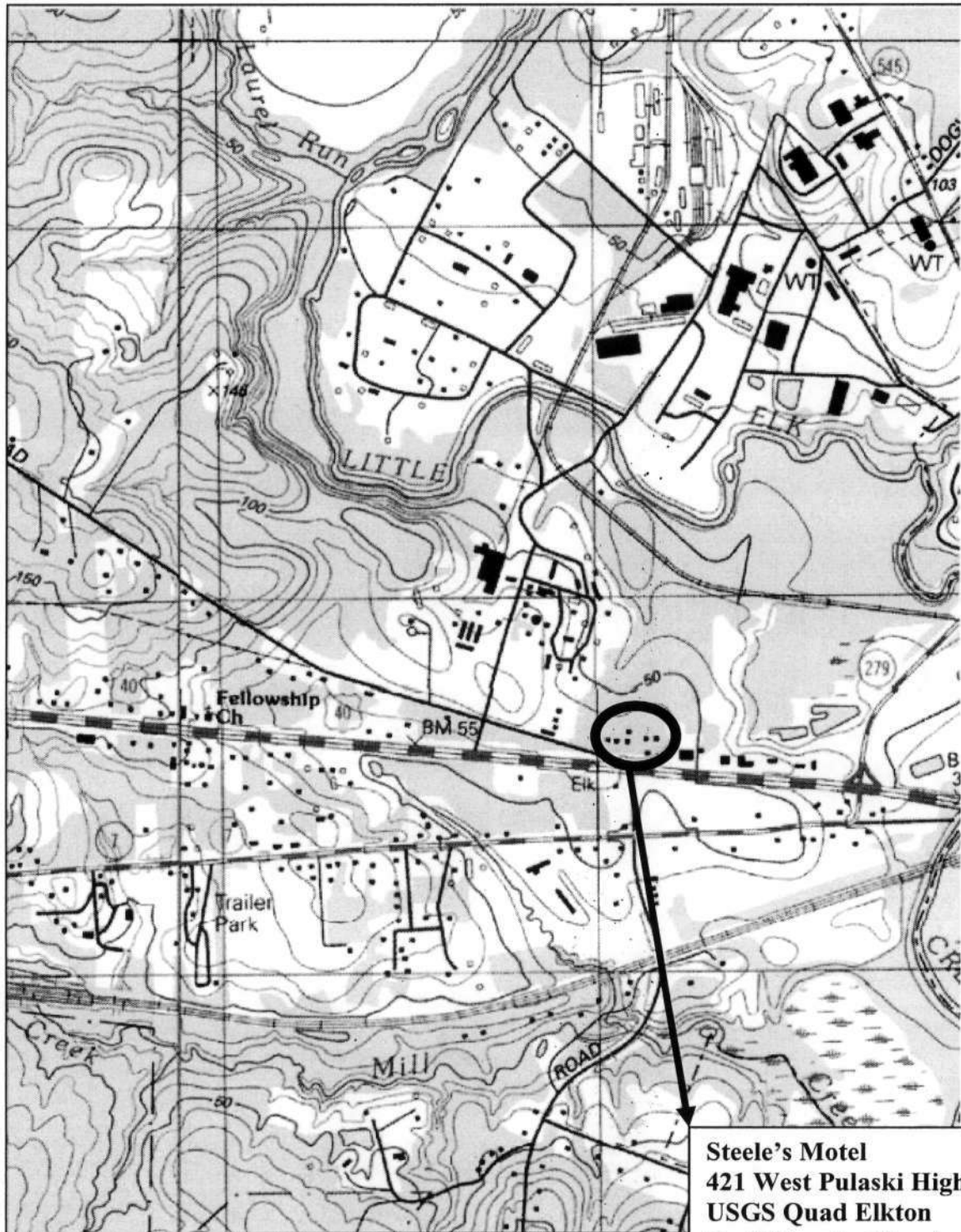
Steele's Motel
Tax Map
421 W. Pulaski Highway
Cecil County, Maryland
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Steele's Motel
Tax Map
421 W. Pulaski Highway
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Steele's Motel
421 West Pulaski Highway
USGS Quad Elkton
Cecil County, Maryland



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STEELE'S MOTEL

421 W. DULASKI HIGHWAY (US 40)

CECIL COUNTY, MARYLAND

SHA

2/2007

MDSHPO

MOTEL OFFICE, LOOKING NORTHWEST

Photo 1 of 7



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STEELE'S MOTEL

421 W. POLASKI HIGHWAY (US 40)

CERIL COUNTY, MARYLAND

SHA

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MOTEL OFFICE, SOUTH ELEVATION LOOKING NORTH

Photo 2 OF 7



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STEELE'S MOTEL

421 W. PULASKI HIGHWAY (US 40)

CECIL COUNTY, MARYLAND

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SOUTH CABINS, LOOKING EAST

Photo 3 OF 7



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STEELE'S MOTEL

421 W. PULASKI HIGHWAY (US 40)

CECIL COUNTY, MARYLAND

SHA

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MD SHPO

NORTH CABINS, LOOKING NORTHEAST

Photo 4 of 7



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STEELE'S MOTEL

421 W. PULASKI HIGHWAY (US 40)

SHA

2/2007

MDSHPD

DWELLING FOUR : COOKING NORTH

PHOTO 5 OF 7



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STEELE'S MOTEL

421 W. PULASKI HIGHWAY (US40)

SHA

2/2007

MD SHPO

DWELLING THREE, LOOKING NORTH

photo of 01-7

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CE-1549

STEELE'S MOTEL

421 W. PULASKI HIGHWAY (US 40)

SHA

2/2007

MD8HPO

DWELLING FIVE, LOOKING NORTHEAST

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